

State Action on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Missouri Takes the Lead

Executive Summary

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The Community Training and Assistance Center is a national not-for-profit organization with a demonstrated record of success in the fields of education and community development. CTAC builds district, state, and community capacity by providing technical assistance, conducting research and evaluation, and informing public policy. It focuses on developing leadership, planning and managerial expertise within school systems, community-based organizations, collaborative partnerships, state and municipal governments, and health and human service agencies. Since 1979, CTAC has provided assistance to hundreds of public institutions, community-based organizations, and coalitions in the United States and several other countries.

CTAC's staff is comprised of nationally recognized executives, educators, policy makers, researchers and organizers who have extensive experience working with city, county and state agencies, educational institutions, federal legislative bodies, not-for-profit organizations, philanthropic institutions and the private sector.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) designated more than \$50 million in state reserve funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to support the recruitment and retention of effective and diverse teachers. These Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants were expended over the period of August 2021 through September 2024. The recipients of these Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants included local education agencies (LEAs), educator preparation programs (EPPs), and community colleges (CCs). In collaboration with these key stakeholder groups, DESE's long-term goal is to build an exemplary state system for teacher recruitment and retention and ensure high-quality teachers for all students.

The Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) was selected to conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of the grants from April 2022 to August 2024. The Phase I evaluation (Liang & Slotnik, 2022a) built an initial understanding of the strategies selected by the grantees. The Phase II evaluation (Liang & Slotnik, 2022b) examined the early implementation of the grants. The Phase III evaluation (Liang & Slotnik, 2023) probed the impact of the grants. This Phase IV evaluation focuses on identifying successful strategies that can be used to inform the creation of a state system which continually addresses supply and demand issues in the Missouri teacher workforce.

The following research questions (RQs) guided the Phase IV evaluation:

- RQ1: To what extent did the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants support grantees to recruit and retain teachers?
- RQ2: Which strategies are most effective in improving grantees' teacher recruitment and retention efforts? Which strategies are less effective?
- RQ3: What are the perspectives of LEA and EPP/CC lead contacts regarding a state system for teacher recruitment and retention?

Findings

LEA Teacher Recruitment (Grow Your Own) Grants

- In both 2023 and 2024, two out of three LEA lead contacts believe their Grow Your Own (GYO) grants contribute to improvement in their teacher recruitment efforts.
- Higher percentages of LEA lead contacts in 2024 than in 2022 indicate seeing indicators of success of their teacher recruitment grants.
- Compared to 2022, all quantitative measures on the effectiveness of the LEA GYO grants are higher in 2024.
- In both 2023 and 2024, nearly all LEA lead contacts believe their teacher recruitment strategies are very effective or somewhat effective.

- LEA lead contacts highlight the effectiveness of such teacher recruitment strategies as providing scholarships and dual credit/dual enrollment opportunities for students; and offering stipends to teachers for coordinating the recruitment activities.
- They also believe strong collaborations, financial resources, and support from the school community all contribute to the effectiveness of their strategies.
- Innovative teacher recruitment strategies include engaging current teachers in recruiting new teachers by offering referral bonuses; and providing teacher candidates with earlier/guaranteed interviews and new hires with extra steps on their salary schedule.

LEA Teacher Retention Grants

- In both 2023 and 2024, two out of three LEA lead contacts indicate their grants contribute to improvement in their teacher retention efforts.
- Higher percentages of lead contacts in 2024 than in 2023 or 2022 indicate seeing indicators of success of their teacher retention grants.
- While more LEA lead contacts indicate it is getting easier to retain teachers than those who believe it is getting more difficult, the majority of LEA lead contacts (67% in 2023 and 61% in 2024) indicate the level of difficulty has been about the same across the years.
- Quantitative data suggest the teacher retention grants are helping many LEAs retain teachers and reduce the number of vacant teaching positions.
- In both 2023 and 2024, most LEA lead contacts believe their teacher retention strategies are very effective or somewhat effective.
- LEA lead contacts highlight the effectiveness of providing or increasing stipends when teachers perform extra duties, and hiring additional substitute teachers, aides, or paraprofessionals.
- They also believe strong collaborations and financial resources, targeted to teacher-identified needs, contribute to the effectiveness of their strategies.
- Innovative teacher retention strategies include increasing teacher pay with enhanced salary schedules or rewarding teachers for staying with the district (e.g., longevity awards). Many LEAs provide non-financial support to teachers (e.g., childcare, four-day weeks).

EPP/CC Teacher Recruitment Grants

- In 2023, 62% of EPP lead contacts believed their grants contribute to improvement in their teacher recruitment efforts. In 2024, that percentage increased to 85%.
- In 2024, EPP lead contacts indicate they see success in collaborating with LEAs (90%), increasing interest in the teaching profession (85%), and building a larger teacher candidate pool (75%).
- Compared to 2022, higher percentages of EPP lead contacts in 2024 indicate observing success in recruiting male teacher candidates (35% vs. 70%).

- In both 2023 and 2024, many EPP/CC lead contacts believe their teacher recruitment strategies are very effective or somewhat effective.
- EPP lead contacts indicate providing students with scholarships for tuition or room and board is effective in teacher recruitment.
- EPP lead contacts believe strong collaborations, institutional support, funding for scholarships, and support from DESE/MTDS, all contribute to the effectiveness of their teacher recruitment strategies.
- EPP/CC lead contacts share their innovative teacher recruitment strategies, including engaging their current students in teacher recruitment and launching local campaigns to recruit teachers.

A State System for Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Lead contacts from LEAs, EPPs, and CCs share their perspectives regarding a state system for teacher recruitment and retention.

- Lead contacts underscore the need for a state system to elevate the status of the teaching profession.
- A state system for teacher recruitment and retention should place emphasis on collaboration among all stakeholders.
- There needs to be sustained funding for teacher recruitment and retention.
- There needs to be ongoing support, in response to teacher-identified needs, throughout a teacher's career continuum.
- Principals' participation in the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) contributes to the recruitment and retention of teachers.
- A state system should, while maintaining high standards, provide more alternative routes to teacher certification.
- It is important to promote the sharing of innovative strategies and effective practices for teacher recruitment and retention.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Playbook

Through the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grants, the DESE supported LEAs, EPPs, and CCs across the state to strengthen their existing strategies and experiment with innovative approaches for recruiting and retaining teachers.

Eight cornerstones of a playbook for a successful state system for teacher recruitment and retention emerge from this unprecedented financial investment in Missouri, extensive collaboration among the LEAs, EPPs, and CCs, and learnings from four phases of a comprehensive evaluation.

- Cornerstone #1: Effective teacher recruitment and retention requires the support of a state system.

- Cornerstone #2: Statewide campaigns are needed to elevate the teaching profession.
- Cornerstone #3: Effective teacher recruitment and retention requires collaboration and constituency building.
- Cornerstone #4: Funding is essential and must be targeted.
- Cornerstone #5: The tools of public policy need to be used strategically.
- Cornerstone #6: Funding and policy choices trigger decisions related to teacher development.
- Cornerstone #7: A state system needs to recognize the critical importance of teacher voice.
- Cornerstone #8: Teacher retention requires the alignment of three factors: recruitment, development, and compensation.

Summary

Missouri is growing in its ability to take on teacher recruitment and retention as a state system. Leaders are owning the responsibility to be hands-on in addressing recruitment and retention needs. With the SEA as the catalyst, the state's educational and governmental sectors are demonstrating their leadership commitment by aligning their expectations, investing both short-term federal resources and long-term state resources, and synchronizing their efforts to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention.